

Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Hearing on "The American Energy Initiative: A Focus on Federal
Government Perspectives Regarding Alternative Fuels and Vehicles"
July 17, 2012
(As Prepared for Delivery)

This is the 26th day of our hearing on the American Energy Initiative. Last week, we held a day of the hearing on alternative fuels and vehicles that focused on non-governmental perspectives.

Today, we will hear three governmental perspectives: the Energy Information Administration, whose projections on alternative fuel and vehicle trends are a very valuable resource for us all, the Environmental Protection Agency, which implements several fuels and vehicles programs like the Renewable Fuel Standard and CAFE/greenhouse gas standards for cars and trucks, and DOE, which heads up the federal research efforts on alternative fuels and vehicles.

Among the things we hope to explore today is the proper role for the government in spurring innovation in alternative fuels and vehicles.

Where the federal government is already involved, we need to monitor its progress and make revisions if necessary. For example, I believe that the Renewable Fuel Standard, created in the 2005 bill and expanded in the 2007 bill, has worked well in several respects. The nation has successfully ramped up ethanol and biodiesel production to meet the standards. Some believe there are challenges with the RFS that require Congress' review.

EPA is also involved in fuel economy/greenhouse gas standards for cars and trucks, and indeed we expect a final rule for light duty standards for 2017-2015 very soon. We need to carefully scrutinize the impact of these standards to ensure they avoid undue costs, such as an increase in sticker prices that would put a new car purchase out of reach for many.

The good news is that a variety of transportation alternatives are on the table - electricity, biofuels, natural gas, propane, coal-to-liquids, and others. Each offers its own unique mix of potential economic, environmental, or natural security benefits as well as costs and technical challenges that need to be overcome.

I might add that while several of these alternative fuels and vehicles look promising, the best news of all is the fact that there is much more oil right here in America than we assumed just a few years ago.

The most sensible policy of all is to make good use of that domestic oil, as well as approving projects like the Keystone XL pipeline that would allow additional oil to come into the country from Canada.

Alternatives should be in addition to - and not instead of - plentiful and affordable supplies of North American oil. A genuine all-of-the-above approach to fuels and vehicles will best serve the interests of the American people in the years ahead.

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